1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

574 224 special request for a certain animal before the active hunters rode into the slaughter.

Objects of material culture were personally owned; but the test of ownership 422 was not production so much as use. Clothing was prepared and made by the women, but owned by the person who wore it. A robe made by a woman for herself was hers, while a robe made for her son or husband belonged to that worthy. Tools and utensils used by the women belonged to the women and were also made by them. Every warrior carried his own kit of tools for the making of bows and arrows. This kit was an indispensable part of his personal equipment and was always carried fastened to his body, so that no matter what the emergency he was prepared to equip himself with weapons. Some older men specialized in arrow-making. They gave arrows to petitioners with or without consideration. Each man marked his own arrows with distinctive feathers or by some characteristic of production. Women made saddles for themselves and held them as their own [492] property. The man's saddle, which was of a slightly different style, was [438] owned by the men. Among the Comanches they were made by Mexican [727] captives who specialized in the trade for pay.

Medicine paraphernalia were made by the owner according to his vision 422 directions. If the help of others was needed, they received no pay other 424 than food. The medicine formula was privately owned, but could be trans- 438 ferred in consideration of payment, or given as gift, or inherited. The power itself, however, had to come through a dream as a confirmation of the efficacy of the transfer. War honors were another very distinct form of incorporeal property. These could be transferred as a gift of high esteem, as has been described. They were not, however, articles of trade in economic exchange.

The tipi, which was made, erected and moved by the woman, was not 422 hers by proprietary right. The decision as to its disposal belonged to the 586 husband, though if generous and well-disposed towards her, he frequently gave it to the wife on separation.

Throughout the simple catalogue of goods we find that articles of per- 422 sonal use were usually personally owned according to the principle of effective utilization.

INHERITANCE

In the disposal of a deceased's property there is but one rule which stood 428 out with constancy: *upon the death of a person all effects of his (or her) per-* 768 *sonal usage were destroyed.* This included clothing, weapons, saddles, tools, paraphernalia, and horses customarily ridden by the deceased. According to Neighbors, "They also killed their favorite wives, but this custom has

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

been done away with from intercourse with the more civilized Indians. . . ."[4] 428
Further, even the tipi in which the dead person, man or woman, lived was 768 ●
totally destroyed; also for a child, but not for a baby. Articles of intimate personal usage were buried with the corpse. Other less important articles were burned. Possessions with medicine powers were either destroyed by throwing them into the river, or by placing them in an unfrequented tree where they could rot.

Claimants for any surplus property were the relatives, close friends 428
of the deceased and fellow tribesmen who came to mourn—especially those who mourned with enthusiasm. Superficially there seems to be no consistency in the Comanche rules of disposal—as to whether goods went to wife, to children, to brothers, or were given to non-relatives. The key is in the recognition of a plurality of levels of legal and customary claims.

First, the surplus property by "law" (presumably law, but its reliability could not be tested to determine enforcement) went to the widow, upon whom the obligation to share with others was imposed. Thus Itoβits said that a wife would "probably" inherit the property, and if her mother-in-law still lived, she might divide with her. Where the marriage had been polygamous, Gets To Be A Middle-Aged Man stated, "Only those wives who had had children by the deceased husband may inherit from him; the first wife administers the distribution." That's It offered that a wife could not keep all the property for herself. "If she tried to, her husband's friends would make trouble."

The first outside claim could be that of the deceased husbands' best friend. He was privileged to ask for the favorite horse: refusal reputedly never occurred. But this was not a cut-in on the widow's property, because if the horse was not given to the intimate friend as a keep-sake, it was invariably slaughtered at the grave. In no event did it enure to the widow. By pre-death testament a man occasionally expressed the desire that his [763]
horse be given to a specified friend, rather than be slaughtered.

Outsiders who had no personal claim to a share in the estate could estab- 428
lish an obligatory claim in two ways. By providing a suit of clothes or add- 626
ing property of their own to the goods buried with the person, they imposed upon the survivors an obligation to share the estate. Visitors mourned and mourned until they were given sufficient gifts to stop them. This was an irresistible pressure from without.

Within the group of heirs, after the wife, surplus horses went to the 428
"father, mother, brothers, and all other relatives according to the degree of

[4] Schoolcraft, *The Indian Tribes, etc.*, vol. 2, p. 133.

5: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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765 around it while singing a doleful song. Some would remain at the grave, mourning and refusing to eat, until relatives forceably took them away. The period of intense mourning was probably from three to fifteen days' duration. Afterwards they might continue to go out from camp at sunrise and at sunset to mourn and "feel lonely" (if in summer, until the leaves fell, or if the winter, until the leaves reappeared). Although a year was considered to be the socially prescribed period of mourning for a close relative, in actual practice no set time was established. A well-to-do widow of three years who came to Marcy's camp in 1854 was still mourning her loss. It was reported that she went out every evening from camp to howl and cry and cut herself with knives. She had separated herself in a measure from the tribe and joined a group of seven other widows who were also still mourning their losses.[28]

Men sometimes cut off their hair ("they thought a lot of their hair") on one side of the head, usually the left, when a close relative or friend died or was killed. Like the women, they occasionally cut their own flesh. They smoked and prayed, and for a few days offered the first morsel of food at each meal to the supernaturals for the benefit of the dead.

●768 Ideally, the immediate family and even the brothers and sisters of the dead gave away or destroyed property, their own as well as that of the estate. Articles of intimate personal usage belonging to the deceased were buried with the corpse—ornaments, trinkets, gun, lance, bow and arrows, axe, knives, pipe and tobacco, cooking utensils, and tools for dressing skins. However, an object of especial value might be held out to be given to a comrade or a dear friend of the deceased with or without his request. Possessions with medicine power were either destroyed by throwing them into the river or by placing them in a tree where they would rot. Even the tipi in which the dead person—man, woman, or child (but not a baby)—lived was burned along with the less important articles. At the funeral of a prominent warrior or member of a well-to-do family, the dead person's horse was given to his best friend or it was slain near the grave. The saddle and bridle were placed in the grave with the corpse. Several horses might be killed, even an entire herd, amounting to as many as three

[28] Parker, *op. cit.*, 192.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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hundred or more of the deceased's best. A more economical practice, which was made to suffice in later days, was simply to shave off the manes and tails of the horses and mules which belonged to the deceased and deposit the hair at the grave. Those who did this were considered stingy, however.[29]

Outsiders who had no personal claim to a share in the estate could establish a claim by providing property of their own to be buried with the deceased.[30] Agent Neighbors observed that these helpers in grief wailed until they received sufficient gifts from the deceased's relatives to induce them to desist. "For instance," he continues, "if a man wants a favorite horse belonging to the brother of the deceased, he continues until he obtains it." Not only the deceased's estate, but the whole family property was drawn upon. If the death occurred in battle, then the demands of wailing and the value of gifts received were enlarged with the result that "from the liberality with which they dispose of their effects on all such occasions of the kind, it would induce the belief that they acquire property merely for the purpose of giving it to others."[31] For the parents, mourning continued until an enemy scalp was brought in.

When people so rendered themselves destitute, they were dependent on the tribe. They were fed and cared for until they were ready to drop their mourning. Then the men of the family went on a raid to obtain horses and start life anew. In the course of time someone was likely to provide a lodge or help make one, and the family settled back to normal life. The death of a prominent member of the band

[29] This description of Comanche mourning is compiled from statements by several informants; also Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 286; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 152, 157; Haley, "Charles Goodnight's Indian Recollections," *loc. cit.*, 24; Yarrow, "A Further Contribution to the Study of Mortuary Customs of the North American Indians," *loc. cit.*, 99–100; Lee, *op. cit.*, 152; Marcy, *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border*, 56; Babb, *op. cit.*, 108, 110, 136–38, 144; Wm. Bollaert, "Observations on the Indian Tribes in Texas," Ethnological Society of London *Journal*, Vol. II (1850), 271; Baylor, "Recollections of the Comanche Indians," *loc. cit.*, 374–75; Ole T. Nystel, "Three Months among the Indians," *Frontier Times*, Vol. V (October, 1927), 41; Adams to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 16, 1890 (Oklahoma Historical Society Library, correspondence file K–33, p. 440).

[30] Informant: Medicine Woman; also, Adams to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 12, 1890 (Oklahoma Historical Society Library, correspondence file K–33, p. 417); Hoebel, *The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians*, 120–23.

[31] Neighbors, "The Naüni or Comanches of Texas," *loc. cit.*, 132.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4. 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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768 generally caused the entire village to be moved. It is possible that this practice sometimes served to check the ravages of disease, but its ostensible reason was to get away from the place of death, even as the tipi was destroyed.

761 Death was not feared by the Comanches. It was ever present and they lived in violence and danger. But the dead caused them great anxiety. They were extravagant in the manifestation of concern. Thus, life, which was received quite casually and with mild pleasure, was closed with extreme emotional outbursts.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
NO6 Comanche NO6

able sum of money building on the Arkansas a village for a certain band to move into. The Indians moved in, and all went well, until the wife of a prominent chief died and the whole band immediately moved out and sought a new location a great way off. The Spanish officer who reported this unfortunate occurrence explained that these Indians had many superstitions, one being that when any prominent person died the camp should be abandoned and the place henceforth avoided.[25] We have the account of a similar occurrence which happened many years later when the son of chief Pah-hau-ca, of the Southern Comanches, died or was killed and the chief abandoned his camp and chattels and moved far north to a new camp.[26] The Comanches would fight desperately to rescue the body of a fallen comrade so long as the scalp was intact; but the moment this was removed they would abandon the body and would not even touch it to bury it. According to some accounts they also held the heart of an animal in veneration and generally avoided touching it when dressing a carcass.[27]

In literature and art the attainments of the Comanches were slight. They had no system of writing other than that of crude pictures and these commonly pertained to wars and the chase. On skins carefully dressed, they often drew designs, a common one being the sun in the center with different colored rays of light radiating out in finely drawn lines. Their shields were generally adorned with pictures and it may be that they, like their allies the Kiowas, had a system of Heraldry.[28] Their paint was made from colored chalks or clay and their brushes from tufts of hair. For drawings of a more temporary character charcoal often served as the pencil and any smooth surface like bone, a board, or the bark of a tree served for canvas.[29]

They had a system of enumeration, but apparently little or no knowledge of the rudiments of arithmetic. The moon periods served as time units; but it does not seem that they had a calendar of any kind, other than the knowledge of the four seasons. They

25. Ugarte y Loyola to Don Fernando de la Concha, July 22, 1785, enclosing copies of reports made by the officers in New Mexico. Ms. Provincias Internas, Mexico City, Tomo 65, University of Texas Transcripts.

26. Statement of Luis Sanches, interpreter, May 1844; Ms. Texas Indian Papers, Texas State Library, Austin.

27. Smithwick, The Evolution of a State, 161.

28. See Mooney, Kiowa Calendar, 230.

29. Smithwick, The Evolution of a State, 160-161; Dr. Ferdinand Roemer, Texas (Bonn, 1849) 293 ff.

10:Horn T-3 (1836-1837) 1955
NO6 Comanche NO6

755 the patient and spirt the water from their mouths in his face, and affectionately enquire if he is better. Should the poor creature answer in the affirmative, [152] (which is not often the case, as might well be supposed,) they attest their joy in the most ludicrous [764] manner; but if the patient dies at this, or at a subsequent period of his illness, he is interred in [757] the grave already dug at his door. The treatment is the same in the case of either sex, and they do not administer any kind of medicine. When a man 764 is buried, they put his gun, powder and ball, bow 768 and arrows, into the grave with him; and when a woman dies, they bury her as above stated, and then burn her tent and all she had; after which, 766 they join together and build the family a new one. When a young child dies, they bury it lashed to the board on which they carry it.

765 But no pen can describe the extent of their wail-
152 ings for the dead. When they return after a long absence, they alight from their beasts, and their women immediately turn them out, and then come and sit down at a respectful distance. Not a word of any kind is spoken by any one; the whole company is seated with the utmost silence. At length, without uttering a word, they begin to cry, and continue in this kind of exercise until it rises to a high pitch; when one of them suddenly stops, rises from his seat, and addresses the company, who at once give him their attention, while he tells them, in substance, that they have met together once more

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

the Indian character. The Comanchees manifest their sensibilities by mourning vehemently for the dead. They continue their lamentations stately, morning and evening, for a length of time proportioned to the affinity and the consequence of the deceased. The women shave their heads and scarify themselves with knives or sharp flints, until they are literally covered with blood. Whether they have derived this practice from the discomfited prophets of Baal, (I Kings 18, 28) is for learned antiquarians to determine. The men set too much value on the velvet softness of their tawny skins, to have them scarred and serrated by so unprofitable a custom; but they will sometimes shave their heads, which is also considered a grievous retrenchment of masculine beauty. At each periodical lament, the bereaved relations assemble unitedly to bewail their departed friend. Tears are shed in copious profusion, accompanied by loud and plaintive strains of hideous dissonance, not unlike the howlings of ravening wolves. The goods and chattels of the deceased, including his tent and all its apparatus, are sometimes burnt; and such of his horses and mules as the avarice of the living will relinquish, are killed in order to be transferred to the hunting grounds of Elysium, for the future benefit and behoof of the dead. It was estimated by eye-witnesses, that during the prevalence of the small-pox among them in 1819, when they were swept off, as with the besom of destruction, there were not less than 5000 of these valuable animals immolated in this manner. The mode of conducting their funeral obsequies, I have never witnessed, and believe they sedulously avoid the observation of strangers of these occasions.

[Note. The length of this letter compels us to divide it. The rest will appear next week.]

[*The Cincinnati Literary Gazette*, June 12, 1824]

Letter IV.

[Concluded]

Vanity, certainly, is not peculiar to the Comanchees, but they possess more vanity both national and personal,

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

In Comanche society, once a woman left her father's camp she must of necessity become a wife. There was not another nook or cranny of Comanche society into which she could crowd herself. There were no avocations open to her. Prostitution and concubinage were not countenanced, and the enslavement of an unattached Comanche woman by another Comanche was completely unthinkable. (An example of the length to which a Comanche's obligation to respect the rights of other Comanches extended may be seen in the situation of the semiwild dogs that infested every camp. These dogs were not pets—they were parasites. But they could be neither killed nor mistreated. They were relatives of the coyote; and since the coyote was a relative of the Comanche, one had as well abuse another Comanche as one of these semiwild dogs.)

Provision for widows was made in this manner: if a man was killed, or if he died from disease, his wives became the wives of his brother or brothers, and his children became the children of his brother or brothers. There was also a relationship known as blood brotherhood, in which two men mingled their blood together. Such a blood brother could succeed as the husband of his deceased blood brother's wives.

During the more than five years when I was among the Comanches and was dealing with them, I became sold on polygamy as a way of life for them. They made it work. After twenty-six years of peace, there continued to be a much larger number of women than men. Though all but three of the old warrior group that I knew had more than one wife, and a number had three or more, I knew of no single man in that age group. Neither were there surplus unattached women. And women must have outnumbered men in the age group of forty-five years and over, by considerably more than two to one.

As nearly as I was able to discover, the multiple wife situation was a development rather than the result of a plan. A man did not decide he was going to have two, three, or more wives and go out and purchase the number he had decided upon. He started modestly, as a young warrior, with the purchase of one wife. Then as he prospered, gained a reputation, and accumulated a horse herd and maybe a baby or two, the work would become too heavy for one wife. Obviously they couldn't secure a hired girl, so they looked around and probably decided between them who would make a satisfactory and agreeable number two wife. When possible, a younger sister of the number

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

was seventeen years before the outbreak of the Civil War, and predates the Mexican War, the last months of the Republic of Texas, and the admission of Texas into the Union. 701

We know when the end of Comanche independence came—June, 1875. That means Mo-cho-rook was an active Comanche warrior for a period of thirty-two years. That was thirty-two years for raids along the Trinity and the Brazos. Thirty-two years of traversing Texas on expeditions into Old Mexico. Thirty-two years to drive off the Charley Goodnight cattle, and sell them to the Spanish in New Mexico. 701 648

Then don't forget that fairly authentic story that the Comanches, during the Civil War, delivered over ten thousand head of Texas cattle to the Union contractors who were furnishing beef for the Union troops. 439

I think I was a bit apprehensive, as I read John Graves's *Goodbye to a River*, that Graves might meet up with Mo-cho-rook's shade and his canoe trip down the Brazos might end in disaster. 000

NOTE: The records at Anadarko show Mo-cho-rook as Comanche Allottee Number C-2307, his birth year as 1826, and show him to have been a Mexican captive. His allotment was about one mile west and four or five north of the present town of Faxon, Oklahoma. It passed into white hands on his death. Casual inquiry brings no information on either his wife or his child. Both did survive him. 127 768